

# LOS ANGELES COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT'S INITIATIVE TO UTILIZE FUNCTIONAL FAMILY THERAPY

## *A Collaborative Effort to Serve Probation Youth and Their Families*

### ***What is Functional Family Therapy?***

Functional Family Therapy (FFT) is a family-based prevention and intervention program that has been found successful in helping at-risk / probation youth and their families. FFT is a short-term program lasting between 8 to 30 sessions. Sessions are conducted in the home or community setting. Services typically last between three months and five months. FFT services are provided by trained and supervised interventionists.

### ***Why Functional Family Therapy?***

FFT has been successful in treating youth and families coping with severe behavioral problems. The treatment model has been refined through clinical research for over 30 years. The result, a program that works! Compared to other treatments or to no treatment, youth and family participation in FFT have significantly lower reoccurrence of negative behaviors and/or family conflict. The research data consistently shows that, when FFT is applied correctly, recidivism is significantly reduced.

### ***Functional Family Therapy Core Principles & Goals***

FFT works to improve family communication by promoting positive family interactions. It assists family members in adopting positive solutions to family problems. FFT recognizes that family problems can be related to factors involving school, peers, economic difficulties, and interaction with the juvenile justice system. A major goal of FFT is to utilize the family's strengths to help build positive interactions within the family as well as within the community.

### ***Functional Family Therapy Programs and Collaborations***

In Los Angeles County, FFT services are offered to probation youth 11 – 18 years old and their families who are struggling with issues related to delinquency, violence, substance abuse, behavior problems and family conflict. Age limit criteria may vary between service providers and programs. Currently, FFT services are offered through a variety of providers, programs and collaborations:

- ❖ Collaborative effort within Service Planning Areas (SPAs) 6 and 8, and partial coverage of SPA 7, and limited coverage of SPAs 4 & 5 between Probation Placement Services Bureau, Department of Mental Health and contracted providers (Starview and Shields) to serve probation youth returning home from Group Home settings and to youth and families at high-risk of being ordered into a Group Home setting;
- ❖ FFT services offered county-wide provided by DPOs trained as FFT Interventionists to youth and families returning home from Group Home settings and to youth and families at high-risk of being ordered into a Group Home;
- ❖ FFT services provided by Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to at-risk and probation youth referred by Probation and other entities county-wide.

***For more information on Probation's effort to provide Functional Family Therapy, contact:***

Hania Cardenas, Director  
Placement Community Transition Services  
LA County Probation Department – Placement Services Bureau  
Phone: 323-730-4512, or 562-335-7760  
hania.cardenas@probation.lacounty.gov